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ABSTRACT

It is hypothesized that the educational, cultural, and historical context in which education takes place, especially in a developing country, will result in a particular view of teaching effectiveness. This study, conducted at the University of Botswana, sought to identify classes of teacher characteristics that were considered to be contributors toward the perceived effectiveness or ineffectiveness of primary school teachers. Questionnaires elicited information from experienced primary teachers regarding characteristics of specific teachers who had taught them in primary school. In addition to demographic characteristics, 14 different teacher characteristics in one of three classes of variables (personality/relationship, instruction, or class management) were rank ordered in terms of their contribution to the perceived effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the identified teachers. Results suggest that "instructional" characteristics of teachers contribute more to perceived teaching effectiveness (but not necessarily ineffectiveness) than do personality or relationship characteristics. It is argued that the context in which teaching takes place (including especially the tacit purpose of education) colors the ways in which persons within that setting understand and evaluate teaching and learning and that attempts to improve teaching in developing countries must begin with an understanding of such perceptions and the context from which they have arisen. (Contains 34 references.) (LL)

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"Good" Teaching in Context: Factors Contributing to Perceived Effectiveness and Ineffectiveness of Primary Teachers in Botswana

by

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Abstract:

It is hypothesized that the particular educational, cultural and historical context in which education takes place, especially in a developing country, will result in a particular view of teaching effectiveness and of the factors which contribute to it. This study sought to identify classes of teacher characteristics in Botswana which were considered to be contributors toward the perceived effectiveness or ineffectiveness of primary school teachers. Questionnaires were used with experienced primary teachers which elicited information about factors which contributed to perceived effectiveness or ineffectiveness of specific teachers which they had had as primary school students. In addition to demographic characteristics, fourteen different teacher characteristics in one of three classes of variables (personality/relationship, instruction or class management) were rank ordered in terms of their contribution to the perceived effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the identified teachers.

Conclusions provide a fairly clear picture of the demographic characteristics of perceived effective (and ineffective) teachers in Botswana. They further suggest that the "instructional" characteristics of teachers in that setting contribute more to perceived teaching effectiveness (but not necessarily "ineffectiveness") than do personality or relationship characteristics. It is argued that the context in which teaching takes place (including especially the tacit *purpose* of education) colors the ways in which persons within that setting understand and evaluate teaching and learning; and that attempts to improve teaching in developing countries must begin with an understanding of such perceptions and the context from which they have arisen.

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Note: The author was a member of the Faculty of Education at the University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana at the time this study was conducted.

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Debate about what constitutes "good" teaching is not new. It has been on-going and perennial since the beginning of formalized education. Unfortunately the modern arguments around the issues, almost without exception, assume the perspective and "common wisdom" of the western, developed world. Thus prescriptions for improvement of teaching have tended to be carried directly over into the developing world context without examining the particularity of the social and cultural circumstances in which schooling in those settings takes place. It is noted that efforts to implement "improvements" in teaching typically meet with mixed results at best and that "attitudes and ingrained habits change slowly" (Yoder & Mautle (1991). But little attention has been paid to the possible ways in which differences in cultural and educational context may lead to different perceptions of what is important and valued in the teaching-learning exchange. The interaction of classroom practices and teaching methodologies with the social norms and expectations would seem to be self-evident but has not been widely explored in the setting of a developing country.

The search for improvement of education in developing countries has tended to focus on the more easily quantifiable aspects of educational "quality" such as years of experience, type of teaching qualification or salaries (Fuller, 1987) or facilities (Mwamwenda & Mwamwenda, 1987) on the one hand or on encouraging the development of more interactional, student-centered, instructional activities (e.g. Mogasha, et. al., 1991 or Horgan, et. al., 1991) on the other. Few have explicitly considered the views of the teacher as a basis for understanding the apparent pervasiveness and persistence of teacher-centered, information-transmission modes of teaching in many classrooms found in developing countries.

Studies of schooling in Botswana and Papua New Guinea, for example, note the dominance of didactic, lecture and information-oriented teaching methods in primary

and secondary school classrooms (e.g., Prophet and Rowell, 1991; Vuliamy 1990; Fuller and Snyder, 1991. See also Fuller, 1987). Learning was observed to be rote with little attention to developing student understanding or to ways of facilitating construction of personal meaning by the student. While the importance of the teacher as a link in the chain of educational reform is widely accepted (e.g. Adams and Chen's observation (1981) that ". . . much of the research evidence indicates that teachers are the rock on which educational reforms founder", p.4), little is known about the ways in which teachers in developing countries perceive or value the teaching/learning process.

Purpose of the study

This study is an investigation of the ways in which teachers enrolled in an upgrading course of study at the University of Botswana perceived the teachers who taught them as primary school school students. It is hypothesized that the educational, cultural and historical context of education in Botswana will result in a particular view of teaching effectiveness and a particular view of the factors which contribute to it. More specifically, the study investigates characteristics associated with teachers remembered as having been particularly effective or ineffective. The study is premised on the assumption that such remembered perceptions can provide insight into what it is that teachers in Botswana value (or don't value) as contributors toward effective primary teaching.

Procedure

Improvement-of-Teaching Traditions

Three broadly defined, though over lapping, traditions for improvement of teaching were identified from the (mainly North American) accumulated research and literature on teaching. There is first of all the preponderate tradition which focuses on instructional matters and methodologies as the key to improved teaching. Here the essence of effective teaching lies in an arena broadly defined as instruction, and brings with it a concomitant focus on teaching strategies and methods. The general assumption made in this tradition is that the better teacher is the one who has selected and implemented the best *instructional method* or approach to the subject and for the class at hand (see e.g. Kourilsky & Quaranta, 1987; Hudgins, 1970, Orlich, et al,1985).

A second broad tradition in improvement of teaching is represented by those who focus on techniques for classroom management, discipline and establishing a positive classroom environment (see e.g. Asiedu-Akrofi,1981; Hurt, et al, 1978; Talmage, et al, 1984; Veenman, 1984). While this tradition does not discount the importance of good instruction it nevertheless assumes that the climate which prevails in a classroom will have a determining impact on the effectiveness of the instruction which takes place there; and that this "climate" by and large is a function of the class management skills which the teacher brings to bear.

The third broad tradition is that which focuses on teachers as persons and on the relationships they develop with their students (see e.g. Brophy & Good, 1974; Maslow, 1954; Youngs, et al, 1970). Hawkins, et al (1988), for example, investigated conditions under which the "social bonding" of low achieving students could be improved under the assumption that improved social bonding should lead to improved learning. (The so-called "Humanistic Education Movement" with roots variously in Dewey (1933), Neill (1960), Holt (1964), Goodman (1964), Kozol (1967) and Rogers (1969) and others should doubtless also be included in this broad tradition, though there is obvious overlap with some of the others.) The working premise here is that the "personality" of the teacher and the interpersonal relationships which she or he developes with their students are critical components of effectiveness. (Though it might be observed in passing that many of these persons would unhappy with a definition of school effectiveness which focussed mainly on the academic.)

The Context: Botswana

Formerly the Bechuanaland Protectorate, Botswana could be cited as a prime example of underdevelopment at the time of receiving its independence from Britain in 1966. With a total population at that time of about 550 000, few apparent natural resources, a minimum of arable farmland and virtually no commercial or industrial infrastructure, it was expected that Botswana would survive on international assistance for the foreseeable future. Some 25 years later the population has more than doubled and the country now enjoys the third highest per capita income in all of Africa; thanks in large part to the discovery and commercial development of major deposits of high-grade diamonds. Almost overnight, the people have emerged from a pre-industrial, rural, agrarian society into the modern world. Modern highways, electricity power grids, and microwave transmission towers now span the country. Telephones are

found in all but the most remote villages and sprawling modern factory complexes are evident in the capital and the outlying areas. Where twenty-five years ago, there was only a cluster of a few thousand persons living along the railroad line from Cape Town to (then) Salisbury, t he capital city, Gaborone has risen, literally from the sand, and has become a modern, urban center of well over 100, 000 persons and is complete with an international airport, high-rise financial buildings, urban sprawl and rush hour traffic.

In a time of such remarkable social and economic change, the educational system has come under great pressure to prepare persons to participate in the modern sector. At independence there were 239 primary schools enroling 54, 800 pupils. There were only two secondary schools in the entire country at that time which offered the full five-year cycle of secondary schooling. By 1988 the number of primary schools had more than doubled while primary school enrollment had increased nearly five-fold to more than 261, 000 students. Ninety-three secondary schools enroled almost 41, 000 students by that time and a new (since 1982) university now enrols nearly 5, 000 students. Glaring disparities remain, however, between the urban and the rural populations and between the "haves" and the "have-nots." More than half the population still engages in subsistence farming and herding, working in the informal sector or is unemployed. These stand in stark contrast to the professional and employed elite of the city--a life style toward which the children of the poor aspire.

In this context, education has been percieved as the major vehicle by which one may better oneself or "get ahead" in the system (Chilisa, 1987). Though access to education has expanded rapidly, it has not been able to keep up with the population and there are not enough spaces at the upper levels. Less than one third of primary school leavers are able to find places in senior secondary school and places in the university (the gateway to joining the most exclusive of the elites) are even more restricted. Selection for each of the successively more restricted places is by examination and there is great pressure on schools and teachers to prepare their students to "pass the test".

It is hardly surprising that the social and educational milieu of a society which is moving at such a breakneck speed into the modern world would lead to a highly instrumental view education. Given further, that advancement through the educational system is controlled by examination performance, one might expect to find a high value placed on teaching as transmission of information and a concomitant perception that

the most "effective" teacher is one who demonstrates effectiveness in the instructional process. For this reason, it was hypothesized that Botswana respondents would tend to see "effectiveness" from the perspective of the first of the "traditions" noted above--that of instructional competence.

Methodology

Participants

The fifty-four participants in the study were students enroled in a degree programme in the Department of Primary Education at the University of Botswana. All were experienced primary school teachers and held a Primary Teaching qualification. More than three fourths (77%) of the respondents gave their highest level of secondary school education as the Junior Certificate (i.e. 2 to 3 years of secondary schooling) while the remaining twenty-three percent had successfully completed the General Certificate of Education (equivalent to 4 to 5 years of secondary schooling). Nineteen of the respondents were in the first year of the programme at the university while twenty-one and fourteen were in their third and fourth years respectively. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents were female and eighty-seven percent of the total indicated that they were between 30 and 49 years of age.

Instrumentation

A two-part questionnaire, each with three sections, requested respondents, first of all, to identify, among their own primary school teachers, the specific teacher whom they considered to have been the most "effective" ("effectiveness" was deliberately left to be defined by the respondent). Demographic information about the selected (i.e. remembered) teacher included sex, the standard (grade) which they had taught, the teacher's approximate age at that time, whether or not he or she (the remembered teacher) was "qualified" (i.e. certificated in some way) and, if so, at what level.

Second, respondents were asked to rank-order fourteen different teacher characteristics (or teaching skills) in terms of the importance of each toward making this particular teacher effective. Finally, respondents were invited to make a free response on what it was that, in their opinion, made this teacher effective.

For the second section, respondents were asked to repeat the previous process, but with reference to their most *ineffective* teacher.

The teacher characteristics or skills which were ranked by the respondents consisted of fourteen statements, each of which could be clustered into one of three groupings, or categories, of teaching characteristics corresponding to the three broad "improvement of teaching" traditions noted above. These were Instruction variables (five) Personality/Relationship variables (five) and Class Management variables (four). The statements were presented in random order on the questionnaire. The same fourteen characteristics were presented twice; once for ranking the effective teacher characteristics and again for the ranking of ineffective teacher characteristics. For the effective teachers, the statements were usually presented in a positive form while for the ineffective teachers, the statements were presented in a negative form where appropriate.

Though the respondents were asked to particularize their perceptions of effective and ineffective teaching by referring to specific individuals in their own experience, it is hypothesized that the individuals chosen (i.e., remembered) represented exemplars of the respondents own present beliefs about good teaching. The responses, then, were understood to be indicators of those aspects of teaching which were most valued by the respondents.

Findings

Descriptive/Demographic

Each of the demographic variables included in the study yielded a statistically significant result ($p = <.05$) for comparisons between effective and ineffective teachers. Tables One through Five show these results.

TABLE ONE
Percentage of Effective and Ineffective Teachers by Sex

	Effective		Ineffective		Total
	N	Percent of Column	N	Percent of Column	
Male	41	75.9%	26	50.0%	67
Female	13	24.1%	26	50.0%	49
Total	54	100%	52	100%	106

p = < .01

From Table One it can be seen that the respondents are more likely to have remembered their most effective teachers as male while their most ineffective teachers are about equally likely to have been remembered as male or female. It should be noted that a contingency table analysis (x^2) for effect of Respondent's Sex on Sex of Teacher (either as effective or ineffective) yielded insignificant results.

TABLE TWO
Percentage of Effective and Ineffective Teachers by Standard Taught

Standard Taught	Effective		Ineffective		Total
	N	Percent of Column	N	Percent of Column	
1	3	5.9%	4	8.0%	7
2	0	0%	2	4.0%	2
3	2	3.9%	12	24.0%	14
4	6	11.8%	13	26.0%	19
5	10	19.6%	6	12.0%	16
6	8	15.7%	8	16.0%	16
7	22	43.1%	5	10.0%	27
Totals	51	100%	50	100%	101

p = <.001

As can be seen from Table Two, more of the effective teachers were teaching in standard seven than in any other standard. Thirty of the fifty-one effective teachers were teaching in either of the two highest standards. The ineffective teachers, on the other hand, tended to be grouped in standards three and four. It is understood that many primary school administrators in Botswana tend to assign their "better" teachers to the upper standards (especially standard seven) and their "poorer" teachers to the middle standards. The pattern of effective and ineffective teachers indicated by these respondents suggests agreement between the students' evaluation of teachers and that of the administrators.

TABLE THREE
Percentage of Effective and Ineffective Teachers by Age Group

Age	Effective		Ineffective		Total
	N	Percent of Column	N	Percent of Column	
20-29	0	0	0	0	0
30-39	5	9.4%	14	27.5%	19
40-49	34	64.2%	20	39.2%	54
50-59	14	26.4%	17	33.3%	31
Totals	53	100%	51	100%	104

$p = <.05$

Table Three indicates that there is some tendency for the effective teachers to be older than the ineffective ones. Almost two thirds of the effective teachers were remembered as being between 40 and 49 years old while a relatively larger proportion of the ineffective teachers fell in either the younger or older groups. Since it would normally be expected that the age of the teachers is positively related to years of experience this finding suggests that the more effective teachers are likely to have been somewhat more experienced than the ineffective ones. This pattern is less clear for the older teachers where it can be noted that more than half of the teachers in the 50-59 age group were considered ineffective.

TABLE FOUR
Percentage of Effective and Ineffective Teachers by Educational Level

Educational Level	Effective		Ineffective		Total
	N	Percent of Column	N	Percent of Column	
Std. Seven	14	27.5%	24	46.9%	51
JCE	27	52.9%	23	49.0%	37
GCE	10	19.6%	2	4.1%	12
Totals	51	100%	49	100%	100

$p = <.05$

Standard Seven = Seventh year of primary school
JC = Junior Certificate. Awarded upon successful completion of national examination following the second year of secondary schooling.
GCE = General Certificate of Education. Awarded upon the successful completion of Cambridge "Ordinary" Examinations at the completion of 5 years of secondary schooling.

Whether or not it is reasonable to think that children in primary classes should know the educational level attained by their teachers is open to question. It is clear from the table, however, that a higher proportion of the effective teachers were thought by their students to have completed secondary school (i.e., obtained a GCE) than the ineffective ones, while a relatively higher number of the ineffective teachers were thought to have completed only standard seven (or primary school).

TABLE FIVE
Percentage of Effective and Ineffective Teachers by Qualification

Qualified	Effective		Ineffective		Total
	N	Percent of Column	N	Percent of Column	
Yes	45	83.3%	27	51.9%	72
No	1	1.9%	12	25.0%	14
Don't Know	8	14.8%	13	23.1%	20
Totals	54	100%	17	100%	106

$p = <.001$

Qualification: Holding a teaching credential.

Again it is unclear to what extent primary school children may be expected to know whether or not their teacher is "qualified". However, it is clear from the responses that a very strong majority of the effective teachers were thought by their students to have been qualified while there was more uncertainty about the ineffective ones.

Summary of Demographic Characteristics

By way of summary, then, it can be seen from Tables One through Five that effective teachers are more likely to have been remembered as:

a) Male
b) Teaching Standard Six or Seven
c) Between the ages of 40-49
d) Better educated than their ineffective counterparts
e) More likely to be qualified than ineffective teachers

Ineffective teachers, on the other hand were more likely to be remembered as:

a) Having been either male or female
b) Teaching at Standards Four or below

c) (As a group), both somewhat younger and somewhat older than the effective ones.

d) Very unlikely to have attained the GCE

e) Likely to be unqualified.

The observed relationships seem to support the conclusion that more experience (up to a point), higher levels of education and qualification as a teacher, may contribute to perceived effectiveness of teaching in Botswana. The relative preponderance of males among the effective teachers needs to be further explored. Unfortunately, it is not possible, from the data, to determine the extent to which the responses reflect cultural perspectives on gender and age or whether males were, indeed, more likely to be "effective" than females.

Rankings of Effective Teacher Characteristics

As noted earlier, respondents were requested to rank order fourteen statements which, in their opinion, contributed most to the effectiveness of the teacher which they had selected (remembered). The mean of the rankings assigned by respondents were calculated for each characteristic and combined to yield an overall ranking. This ranking is presented in Table Six. Since the most important characteristics were ranked beginning with one, the lower the mean for each characteristic, the more important it was considered to be.

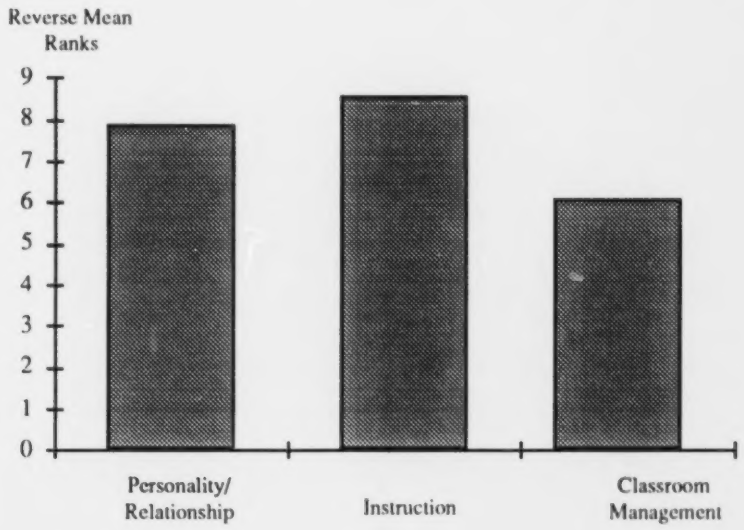
TABLE SIX
Mean Rankings of Characteristics Which Contribute Most Toward Perceived Teacher Effectiveness

Rank	Characteristic	Type of Variable	Mean Value
1	Knew Subject Well	Instruction	5.14
2	Had Friendly Personality	Personality/Relationship	5.35
3	Had Interesting Lessons	Instruction	5.59
4	Made Subjects Understandable	Instruction	6.37
5	Cared about Individual Students	Personality/Relationship	6.41
6	Helped Slow Learners	Instruction	6.43
7	Demanded Hard Work	Class Management	7.06
8	Helped Students Feel Good About Being in Class	Personality/Relationship	7.06
9	Had Good Class Control	Class Management	7.12
10	Related Well to Students	Personality/Relationship	7.61
11	Made Fair Evaluations	Instruction	8.73
12	Expected Good Performance of All	Personality/Relationship	9.35
13	Had Strict Discipline	Class Management	10.14
14	Was Not Too Strict	Class Management	11.45

As can be seen from the table, three of the top-ranked four characteristics have to do with how well the teacher carries out instruction in the classroom, with "knowledge of the subject matter" appearing to be particularly important. While it was considered important that the teacher have a "good" personality, it would appear that respondents considered knowledge of the subject, along with the ability to present it understandably, to be of foremost importance in the primary school classroom. Though important, personality and relationship factors, were nevertheless secondary. Classroom management characteristics were relegated to a fairly clear third place, overall.

The relative importance which respondents attached to the different traditions for improvement of teaching (as represented by clusters, or categories, of teacher characteristics or skills) are indicated by the category means (reversed, in this case so that high numbers represent high importance). Figure 1 shows the reversed mean rank of teacher characteristics by category (or tradition).

FIGURE ONE
Reversed Means Ranks of Effective Teacher Characteristics by Category



It seems clear, that taken together, Instructional characteristics or skills seemed to have been considered most important, with relatively low importance attached to class management skills.

Rankings of Ineffective Teacher Characteristics

The same 14 characteristics were used for consideration of factors contributing most toward making the so-identified teachers seem ineffective, except that, in most cases, the statements were framed negatively instead of positively. Where a particular statement could be viewed as either negative or positive, it was phrased the same for both the effective and ineffective teachers. Table Seven presents the rankings for the Ineffective Teachers.

TABLE SEVEN
Mean Rankings of Characteristics Which Contribute Most Toward Perceived Teacher Ineffectiveness

Rank	Characteristic	Type of Variable	Mean Value
1	Unfriendly Personality	Personality/Relationship	4.96
2	Did Not Make Students Feel Good About Being in Class	Personality/Relationship	5.45
3	Uninteresting Lessons	Instruction	5.80
4	No Help For Slow Learners	Instruction	5.84
5	Could Not Make Difficult Subjects Understandable	Instruction	5.88
6	Did Not Care about Individual Students	Personality/Relationship	6.06
7	Did Not Relate Well to Students	Personality/Relationship	6.84
8	Did Not Know Subject Well	Instruction	7.63
9	Had Strict Discipline	Class Management	8.22
10	Had Poor Class Control	Class Management	8.26
11	Was Not Too Strict	Class Management	9.44
12	Unfair Evaluations	Instruction	9.61
13	Did Not Expect Good Performance of All	Personality/Relationship	9.96
14	Demanded Hard Work	Class Management	10.28

It can be seen that in comparison to the mean rankings for effective teachers there was somewhat more agreement (i.e. a lower mean value) on the single most important characteristic contributing to perceived ineffectiveness -- having an "unfriendly personality". Both of the two highest ranked (i.e. the two most important contributory factors) were related to Personality/Relationship. The one characteristic considered to contribute most to being an ineffective teacher (having an unfriendly personality) was

the same (but of course in the opposite direction) as the one which was ranked second in the effective teachers ranking. On the other hand, knowledge of the subject (actually *lack* of knowledge of the subject) was ranked 8th for ineffective teachers in contrast to the top ranking it received in the effective teachers. In general, it would appear that ineffective teaching was more likely to be perceived in terms personality and relationship than in instruction.

The reversed means of the rankings by category for Ineffectiveness are shown in Figure Two.

FIGURE TWO
Reversed Means Ranks of Ineffective Teacher Characteristics by Category

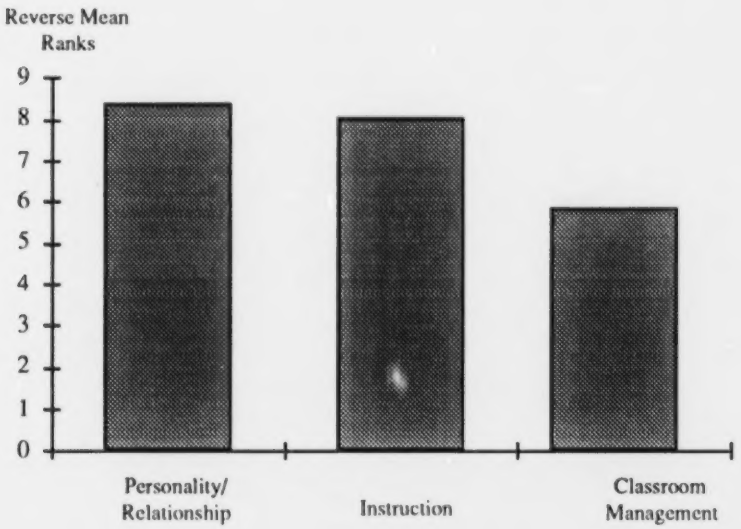


Figure 2 supports the conclusion that, for these respondents, the most important category of characteristics contributing toward ineffectiveness is Personality/ Relationship but Instructional characteristics remain a close second.

Comparison and Summary of Findings From Rankings

Though the mean rankings of characteristics contributing to ineffective teaching are not identical to those which were believed to contribute to effective teaching, there are, nevertheless, notable similarities. Many of the "effective characteristics" are the same ones, which, by their absence or negative demonstration, contribute toward

"ineffectiveness". A more systematic comparison of mean rankings was done by translating each of the characteristics into it's common designation (i.e. disregarding the negative or positive direction of the statements) and calculating a Spearman Rank Order correlation. This resulted in a rho of .61, confirming the observation of the tendency for similar characteristics to be considered important in terms of their contribution toward being seen as either an effective or ineffective teacher.

Of the fourteen characteristics included, significant (unpaired t-test) differences between mean rankings were found for five: "Requiring Hard Work" ($p = .001$: contributing more toward effectiveness), "Exercising Strict Discipline" ($p = < .05$: contributing more toward ineffectiveness), "Not Being Too Strict" ($p = < .01$: contributing more toward effectiveness), "Knowing the Subject Well" ($p =< .01$: contributing more toward effectiveness) and "Making Students Feel Good About Being in Class" (p. <.05: contributing more toward effectiveness).

In summary, it seems clear from the rankings that effective teachers were perceived, first of all, as knowledgeable about their subject matter and able to teach well. Having good personality and relationship skills are also important though it is by their absence that they appear to contribute toward a perception of *in*effectiveness. That is, respondents appeared to consider instructional skills to be primary contributors toward effectiveness, while negative personality and relationship skills contribute toward ineffectiveness.

Conclusions.

Conclusions and interpretation must be tentative, since there has been no formal validation of the instrument and the restricted sample cannot necessarily be regarded as representative. Nevertheless, several tentative conclusions can be drawn.

1. Characteristics of Effective Teachers

   Based on the structured rankings, it would appear that for Botswana respondents, subject knowledge and general instructional skill are perceived as important contributors toward being considered an effective teacher. Personality characteristics, though important, are nevertheless considered to be

second place. Characteristics having to do with class room management and discipline appear to be even less important.

2. Characteristics of Ineffective Teachers

The structured rankings suggest that personality characteristics and the inability to make students feel good about being in their class were major contributors toward teachers being considered ineffective. The absence of good instructional skills such as the ability to present interesting lessons, or to make difficult subjects understandable also appeared to be important but second, in this case, to the more personal characteristics. Problems with discipline and class management skills remained generally in the bottom half of the rankings.

In general it would appear that knowledge of the subject and being able to present good lessons are, for these Botswana respondents, the *sine qua non* of good teaching. On the other hand, the absence of appropriate personality or relationship skills, appears to preclude, for these respondents, the perception of instructional competence.

The common perception among Botswana's teachers (as demonstrated in classroom practice) that teaching should focus on transmission of information, has been documented elsewhere (Prophet and Rowell, 1991). It thus seems reasonable to speculate that the social and (especially) the educational contexts of Botswana may have contributed to tacit assumptions about the role and purpose of education and, by extension, to notions about the role and function of teaching. Where education is seen primarily as a vehicle for enhancing personal career opportunities and where the major hurdles to be overcome in attaining such opportunities is performance on a series of knowledge-based examinations, it seems predictable that ideas about what contributes to effective teaching would be focussed on education-as-information. From such a perspective, good teaching may be judged by considering the effectiveness with which information is transmitted and the "good teacher" is the one who contributes most to mastery of subject content and to good performance on the exams. How one "feels" about the educational experience in these circumstances is then less important.

Such an instrumental view of education would seem to be consistent with some of the assumptions about education and teaching inherited from Botswana's colonial past.

Though there have been significant changes in attitudes and educational philosophy since independence, vestiges of the highly selective, meritocratic system of colonial education remain and one of the basic purposes of education continues to be that of "sorting out" (and labeling) people on the basis of how far they have managed to penetrate the educational gauntlet. Thus again, from the student's point of view, it is critical that the teacher enable one to be "successful" in terms of content mastery. It seems reasonable to expect that those who teach in such settings may be slow to change from more didactic methodology because of fears that such a change would compromise mastery of content and restrict opportunities available to their students. (This is not to mention that the teachers' own competence is frequently evaluated by superiors, and by the community at large, on the basis of how well their students perform on the examinations.)

The findings seem clear in their implication that notions about the nature of good teaching should begin with an understanding of the setting in which it is to take place . Improvement of educational practice in developing countries needs to begin with an understanding of the broad social, cultural and educational context which may have contributed to the rise and maintenance of the "common wisdom" reflected in present practice. This is not to imply that present practice should not be challenged or that the status quo needs to be maintained. It is, rather, to argue that efforts toward improvement must begin with an attempt to understand how things have come to be the way they are.

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